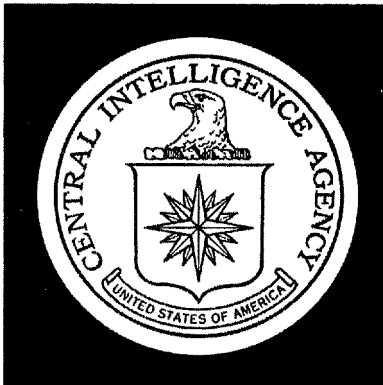


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MEMORANDUM

Special Assessments on the Middle East Situation

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
13 June 1967

I. POLITICAL CHANGES IN ISRAEL AND THEIR
LIKELY EFFECTS ON ISRAELI POLICY

1. Levi Eshkol, Israeli prime minister, a weary man who has suffered two heart attacks, has been presiding over a weak coalition government. He has borne the brunt of a deteriorating economy and an increasingly precarious security situation during the past several years, culminating in the outbreak of hostilities. An irreconcilable split in the MAPAI Party between him and Ben Gurion resulted in the formation of RAFI, the splinter group which followed Ben Gurion out of office and party. He also has been subjected to severe criticism by outspoken members of his own coalition, by Menahem Begin of the Herut Party and by the public, in particular by the average Israeli citizen-soldier, i.e., the younger generation which feels neglected and ignored by the aging Old Guard.

2. The basic complaint against Eshkol, and his associates, e.g., Golda Meir and Foreign Minister Abba Eban, has been that they are weak, compromising leaders. This criticism was sharpened in the present crisis.

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3. In the euphoria of the military victory achieved under the leadership of Dayan, Israel may be on the verge of internal political changes which will greatly affect Israeli terms for a peace settlement. Dayan's voice in this matter will be highly influential and perhaps dominant.

4. Eshkol's survival to date has been due more to his falling in line with the thinking and positions of

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General Dayan than to any initiative of his own. If a national election were held in the near term, Dayan would probably sweep the country. The national alignment coalition of MAPAI and other labor parties will probably continue to function, although Eshkol would probably be forced out of office if he did not go along with policies of Dayan and his supporters. There are signs that Dayan is already becoming restive at Eshkol's actions as prime minister. On the whole, we think Eshkol will remain prime minister until his usefulness is exhausted. When circumstances permit, an orderly transition can occur. The dominant position of the Old Guard in Israeli politics, which has persisted for decades, will probably disappear in the course of such a transition.

5. In these circumstances, Dayan would want to move in a new team, uncommitted internally as well as externally. If he were to become prime minister, it is probable he would retain the portfolio of minister of foreign affairs. It is quite likely that General Yitzhak Rabin, General Amit, or Shimon Peres would be named minister of defense. General Yigael Yadin, Israel's first chief of staff and renowned soldier-scholar, could enter the cabinet.

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6. Before the outbreak of the current war there was widespread and long-standing discontent among Israeli youth and their leaders toward the old emigré establishment and their friends who had run the country quite arbitrarily since its founding. Until the emergence of Dayan, there were no individuals or symbols in the government to which they could attach themselves. Eshkol is now 72 and of the 18 cabinet members, eight are over 60, a venerable age in a country where the accent is on youth. Dayan, Peres, and other leading members of RAFI represent the protest of youth.

7. Dayan and the hard liners he represents will take very strong positions on the terms of a

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settlement with the Arabs. They are likely initially to demand that Israel keep all its conquests. Some of these demands, e.g., Sinai and the Syrian area east of the hills above the upper Jordan River, would be put forth only for bargaining purposes. Others, e.g., areas controlling the Strait of Tiran, the Old City of Jerusalem, and militarily important land along the Syrian and Jordanian borders, are likely to be fought for vigorously. Dayan and his supporters

believe that Israel must be highly self-reliant and that it can virtually ignore foreign opinion on questions of basic national interest. Their attitude, with its great reliance on force, is likely to be a factor greatly complicating efforts to achieve a settlement of the present crisis.

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